(b) The Government of India and the industry have been working in promoting the interests of the Indian IT industry and have also been closely monitoring the situation in consultation with our Missions.

Tax on cement production

†1183. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is heavy tax on cement production;

(b) if so, the stages of production on which Government realize tax and cess alongwith the rates thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Government's attention has been drawn to reduce the rate of tax; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (d) There is no stage-wise tax on the production of cement. Inputs like limestone, coal and power used in the production of cement are subject to payment of royalty and duty on power tariff. Royalty on limestone and coal at the rate of Rs. 60/- and Rs. 20/- per tonne respectively is fixed by the Centre and revenue is collected by the State Governments. Duty on power tariff is fixed and collected by the State Governments and varies from State to State. Besides these, excise duty, sales tax and octroi are imposed on the final product. Excise duty at the rate of Rs. 400 per tonne of cement is imposed and collected by the Centre. Sales tax and octroi are imposed by the State Government and their local municipalities respectively and also vary from State to State.

Trade with New Zealand

1184. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that New Zealand has identified forestry, IT and biotechnology as key areas of trade with the country;

(b) what is the present trade position with New Zealand; and

† Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

(c) the future expansion plan to boost trade?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The bilateral trade between India and New Zealand during the year 2003-04 is of the order of US$ 163.87 million as compared to US$ 144.10 million during the previous year.

(c) The trade between the two countries is monitored through the institutional mechanisms such as the Joint Trade Committee (JTC) and Joint Business Council (JBC). In additioin, our Mission has also been organizing Buyer Seller Meets to boost the trade.

WTO Draft Agreement

1185. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Conference of 148 countries was held in Geneva last month to discuss WTO draft agreement to set the broad colours of new World Trade Order;

(b) if so, whether India's grave concern regarding safeguarding the interests of the farming sector was effectively represented at the Conference; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and reaction of the developed countries thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) Yes, Sir. The General Council of the 147-Member WTO met in Geneva during 27 July to 1 August, 2004 with a view to arriving at a consensus on adopting a Framework Agreement that would set a roadmap for the on-going negotiations under the Doha Work Programme.

(b) and (c) An Indian delegation led by the Minister of Commerce and Industry actively participated in the negotiations, leading to this Framework Agreement adopted on the 1st August, 2004. With a view to safeguarding the interests of the farming sector India made concerted